Title: The Representation of Religion in Girish Karnad's Select Plays

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Synopsis

Before discussing this topic, we first should know something about the word religion. What is religion? Religion is a human response which is beyond human existence and human world and religion consists of some dogmas and rituals. Religion is institutionalized also. People used to go Temple, Masjid, Church and Gurdwara for worshipping God. Religion is of so many kinds - Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism and Sufism etc.

In my thesis, I have showed how Karnad has presented religion in his select plays. e.g, if we go through Karnad's play *Yayati*, the issue of gender-bias in *Yayati* is highlighted because Chitralekha rebels against unjust and gender - bias norms and strictures of the Indian patriarchal society. In this play we see that marriage is affected by caste-system. Devyani objects about Yayati's marriage with Sharmistha because he belongs to Rakshasa cult and the relationship of a Bharata king with a woman coming from Rakshasa community is objectionable.

Tughlaq is a drama in which Tughlaq being an Islam gives same priority to all religions like Hindus and Muslims. In his kingdom there is too much conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims and his heart and soul endeavour is to bring harmony between them and he always gives equality to all religions and Karnad presents Tughlaq as a symbol of religiosity. If we go through another play like *Hayavadana*, here cast or religion is also reflected. The play begins with the invocation of Lord Ganesha, besides the presence of Goddess Kali is a symbol of religiosity. In the play *Hayavadana*, characters of Kapila and Devadatta are manifestations of the images of different castes in our society and Hayavadana himself is a symbol of identity crisis because he is a combination of half-horse and half-man who seeks for completeness and suffers from identity crisis and his own existence.

Bali, the Sacrifice is based on two aspects of religion. It shows a conflict between violence and non-violence, conflict between Brahminism and Jainism. In this play, there is a conflict between Brahminical order of violence represented by Queen Mother and Jain principle of non-violence represented by the queen. Brahminism gives emphasis on animal sacrifice to propitiate Gods and Jainism totally opposes it. In *Nagamandala*, we see that the story is totally based on the south Indian religious myth of King Cobra. According to the folk-lore of South-Indian villages, there is a practice among women to pour milk on ant hill occupied by Cobras ritualistically on certain day in a year; i.e., 'Nagulachaviti', 'Nag-panchami' (the fourth or fifth day of the waxing period of the moon to get good husbands for unmarried woman and the barren woman to get child). *Tale - Danda* presents the ugly deformity of Hindu society through the depiction of twelfth century communal struggle. The play actually shows how caste-system has

given the Brahmins and other high caste people a privileged position and they never want to tolerate any violation including inter-caste marriage. Basavanna, being a Brahmin rebels against the rigid practices of caste system and eventually presents his own theosophy with a casteless society at its core.

The Fire and the Rain deals with the issue of caste system. In the play *The Fire and the Rain* the king proposes to propitiate God through fire sacrifice so that he would be satisfied to send rain on earth. So from this fire sacrifice we can realize that in that time people has complete faith in religion. Arvasu prepares to marry outside his Brahmin caste, he goes to marry a tribal girl called Nittilai - but for this, he has to prepare himself before Village elders. In *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan,* from the very beginning to the end the existence of God as well as religion is dominating in the play and Tipu's mentioning of religion in his dream proves that he is really very religious by heart. So in the second dream, Tipu's endeavour of projecting a collapsed temple and his belief on God and fraternity prove that he is religious by heart. After gaining victory, he gives thanks to God as he wanted victory. So from the very beginning to the end the existence of God as well as religion is dominating in the play. *The Flowers* is a presentation of a priest's conflict between erotic love and religious devotion. Being a priest, he ignores his religious attitude and lasts for a courtesan woman. In this play, *the Flowers* religion is neglected because it cannot restrict a priest from committing such a sinful action!

In my thesis, two theories are applicable- 1) Feminist theory and 2) New Historicism Theory. Generally feminism means equal opportunity of women in the field of political, social and economic field. Feminism can be defined as the 'advocacy of the rights of women.' The term implies the identification of women who are systematically oppressed. Feminist movement involves some rebellious issues such as women's liberation, freedom, radical feminism, social emancipation and many more. In the early 1920s, Feminism was headed by Alexandra Kollontai who was responsible for introducing wide-ranging reforms and its reform is women's emancipation. Feminist beliefs have existed throughout history because at that time people used to confine at home and they had no right to voting and all the institutions of higher studies and professional careers were beyond the reach of women. In Western society, women's issue is mainly for job equality and sexual roles. But in Eastern society, woman being a mother, wife, daughter and amidst all tries to show her womanly power. Feminist criticism tries to describe and interpret women's experience which is depicted in various kinds of literature like novel, poetry and drama. Feminism questions phallocentric ideologies, patriarchal attitudes and male - interpretations in literature and it also questions numerous prejudices and assumptions about women made by male writers. Girish Karnad's plays show how women are neglected and tortured at the hands of hypocritical patriarchal society. Feminism theory is applicable in *Yayati, The Flowers, Nagamandala, Hayavadana, Tale-Danda, Bali, the Sacrifice* and *The Fire and the Rain.* In *Tughlaq, Tale-Danda* and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan,* the relevance of history and its incorporation in the literary texts create a new perspective. So here we can apply New Historicism theory. New Historicism is a term applied in American academic literary studies in the 1980s that emphasized the historical nature of literary texts and at the same time the textual nature of history. New Historicism throws light on the nature and constitution of history and it deconstructs the notion of objectivity in history. The New Historicism is especially associated with Stephen Greenblatt who popularized the term in 1982 in the preface to a collection of essays published in the journal *Genre*. New Historicism emphasizes the historical nature of literary texts and at the same time the 'textual' nature of history. It is a system of interpretation about the

relationship between literature and history. This theory examines how a text is constructed from its context or how a text can be evaluated in its context. It is a reaction against New Criticism and deconstruction. It breaks down the familiar distinctions between a text and its historical background.

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